

Westchester CSEA threatens to sue Astorino over Section 8 contract

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WHITE PLAINS — Westchester's civil service union plans to go to court to reinstate 38 county workers fired when the county ended its long-running contract to run the local Section 8 housing program for the state.

Karen Pecora, Westchester County president of the Civil Service Employees Association, said she's challenging County Executive Rob Astorino's authority to cut the jobs after they had been reinstated by the county Board of Legislators this month. "We believe that the authority to not go into contract with the state to administer the program was not at the sole discretion of the county executive," Pecora said. "We believe that the charter says that it is a dual responsibility of the county executive and the legislators," she said. "Therefore, he went into it illegally, and we're fighting. That's what we're looking to do, to take him to court."

Astorino had informed state officials that he would terminate the contract to run the Section 8 office, a state program administered by the county for decades. Astorino included those jobs in the 226 positions he proposed to cut in the 2011 budget. The county board restored 190 of the posts, including the Section 8 jobs, in a budget it passed Dec. 23. Nonetheless, the workers received termination notices this week. Ned McCormack, senior adviser to Astorino, said that despite the board's vote, there was no contract to run the program and, therefore, no jobs for the workers. "The county terminated the contract with the state because we were losing money on it," he said. "It's the county executive's job to run the government and administer the contracts."

Pecora said the union plans to challenge whether Astorino was authorized to do so.